

National Marine Fisheries Service



Species of Concern Proactive Conservation Program

What is a “Species of Concern”?

A “Species of Concern” is a species or vertebrate population for which there is concern or great uncertainty about its status. Species of Concern are not listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and are not protected by the ESA. NMFS believes it is important to highlight species that could benefit from proactive conservation efforts. NMFS funds grants to states and management agencies, as well as using internal funding to our science centers and regions, to support projects to conserve Species of Concern.



Large adult humphead wrasse (*Cheilinus undulatus*). Western Pacific. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.



Ivory bush coral (*Oculina varicosa*). NOAA

What are the Species of Concern Program Goals?

The goals of the Species of Concern Program are:

- To increase public awareness about these species;
- To identify those species potentially at risk and in need of protective measures before listing under the ESA becomes necessary;
- To identify data deficiencies and uncertainties associated with the status of the species;
- To work cooperatively with regional co-managers and interest groups to obtain the information necessary to evaluate species status and threats;
- To identify conservation opportunities; and,
- To work proactively with Federal and state agencies, Native American tribes, and the public to conserve the species.

Species of Concern Program Facts

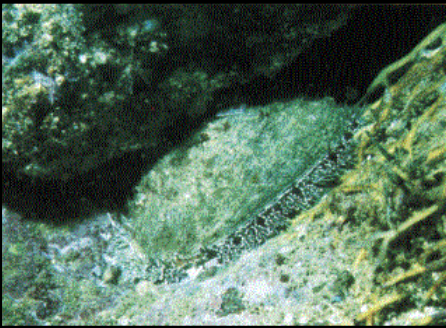
Program Start Date: 2004

Current Number of
Species of Concern: 42

FY 2006 Grant Funds
disbursed: \$490,000



Atlantic wolffish (*Anarhichas lupus*). NOAA



Green abalone (*Haliotis fulgens*). California.

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For Further Information

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What are the Species of Concern?

There are currently 42 Species of Concern in the United States

1 marine mammal: Cook Inlet beluga whale in Alaska

34 fishes

Atlantic: 6 sharks and skates, white marlin, alewife, 9 others

Southeast: 3 groupers, 5 others

Pacific: 3 salmonids, 2 rockfishes, green sturgeon, Pacific hake

Western Pacific: humphead wrasse, bumphead parrotfish

2 Corals: Hawaiian reef coral (HI), ivory bush coral (Southeast)

4 West Coast Abalone, 1 Hawaiian brachiopod: *Lingula reevei*

For current list see: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/species/concern>

Program Accomplishments

- Two grants to states were funded in 2006 for a total of \$490,000 to improve the status of four Species of Concern: three species of finfish in the Gulf of Maine, and the saltmarsh topminnow in the Gulf of Mexico
- A National Workshop was held in 2006 to continue development of the program and refine the designation process
- Pacific Regional "Get out the word" workshop was held in 2006
- Multiple status reviews and research projects of NMFS staff were funded internally with \$172,000 in program funds

What Do we Consider in Identifying Species of Concern?

- Abundance and productivity:
 - Magnitude of decline – combination of recent rate of decline and historical extent of decline
 - Natural rarity – species known only from a few specimens or that occurs rarely and in small numbers
 - Endemism – species or population that is native to a particular place and is only found there
- Distribution:
 - Population connectivity – level of reproductive exchange among related populations
 - Limited geographic range – found in a limited area
 - Endemism – species or population that is native to a particular place and is only found there
- Life-history characteristics:
 - Vulnerable life-history strategies – e.g., low fecundity, late age at maturity, slow growth rates
 - Resilience to environmental variability and catastrophes
 - Loss of unique life-history traits
- Threats:
 - Extraction – permanently removes the species from its habitat
 - Habitat degradation and loss – destruction, modification, or loss to a species' habitat that could result in a lower carrying capacity
 - Disease and predation – can influence the abundance and productivity of a species or population
 - Other natural or man-made factors for decline: includes ocean conditions and poor hatchery practices